

Generosity

AT HOUSTON'S FIRST

PURPOSEFUL GIVING

God asks us to trust Him in all things, even during major life changes. One Houston's First couple walked in faith during a cross-country move, as they started a new business, and as their family grew larger.

Andrew and Suzanne Heber moved from Indiana to Houston five years ago with four kids in tow, and searched for quite a while before finding a church home at Houston's First.

"The biblical preaching from Pastor Gregg is the thing that drew us," said Andrew. "He's not afraid to tackle the hard subjects. All that — and we just felt at home."

The couple found their place of community in Dr. David Self's Life Bible Study, where they are among the youngest in the class. Suzanne's heart for serving is satisfied by visiting ailing class members. Providing meals or simply walking through life's tough situations with the friends they have made in their class has also given them a sense of belonging and people to love.

Since relocating to Houston, Andrew resigned his management position at Caterpillar, started an insurance agency, and the couple added two more children to their family. Money got tight and they began living off savings while he worked to build his insurance business. Even so, the couple purposed in their hearts to continue tithing. "We just had to do it," said Andrew. "The church still has to function."

The couple set up a monthly gift from their savings account to support the work of the church, and now in their third year of business, they decided to increase their level of giving. "We have seen God be faithful," said Andrew. "And it's exciting to be part of a church that is preaching God's Word and is so heavily involved in missions work."



The practice of tithing is something the Hebers are passing along to their children. "They can do small jobs like clean my office to earn money," said Andrew. "We show them that they should set aside 10 percent for savings and 10 percent for a tithe out of their earnings. They love bringing their coins in offering envelopes to church on Sundays."

The ongoing challenge of growing the client list of a relatively new business start up and the news that they are expecting another child — their seventh — has not changed their minds about the level of generosity they have chosen in support of the church. "Suzanne and I have never been in a church where we are as excited about the direction of its ministry as we are at Houston's First," said Andrew.

GIVING AT HOUSTONSFIRST.ORG

Visit the Giving page at HoustonFirst.org to read more generosity stories, make one-time or recurring contributions, give to mission trips, and more.

NEWS + UPDATES

ALL CAMPUSES

HighPoint Bible Study

Wednesdays @ 11:30a — 1010 Lamar (Tunnel Level)

This weekly downtown Bible study is open to everybody! Dr. David Self will be teaching this Wednesday beginning at 12:10p. Bring your lunch, or purchase one there for \$8. Visit HoustonFirst.org to learn more.

CONTACT Diane.Bagby@HoustonFirst.org

First H.O.P.E. Training

Sat, Jun 11 @ 9a-12p — The Loop (Rm 501/502)

For job seekers and those wanting a career change, First H.O.P.E. job ministry offers a professional consultant, resume/interview tips, career assessment, and more. Join us for this training with guest speaker Marguerite Murphy as she speaks on job readiness.

CONTACT Bob.Stroud@HoustonFirst.org

NEXTGEN MINISTRIES

Family Mission Trip

Fri, Jul 29 @ 8a-4p — Galveston Urban Ministries

Great things happen when families serve together, putting their attention on the needs of others and using their gifts along the way. On this one-day mission trip, kids in 1st-5th grades and their families will work together to help Galveston Urban Ministries. The cost is \$30/family member, with a maximum of \$120/family. Register at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Hannah.Bush@HoustonFirst.org

Parenting Workshop with Dr. Tim Elmore

Sat, Aug 27 @ 9a-1p — The Loop (Worship Ctr)

Ever wonder what you're getting right and what you're getting wrong? In this workshop, best-selling author and speaker Dr. Tim Elmore will discuss *12 Huge Mistakes Parents Can Avoid* when leading their kids. Dr. Elmore will also provide practical and effective insights designed to help you lead kids to succeed before/after graduation, prepare them to become adults, and much more! Register for \$15/person or \$20/couple at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Katie.Walker@HoustonFirst.org

COLLEGE/SINGLES/MARRIED

The Porch Live

Tuesdays @ 7:13-9p — The Loop (Chapel)

Houston's First is partnering with The Porch Dallas to bring The Porch Live worship experience to Houston for a new season. People in their 20s and 30s gather on Tuesday nights for live worship, great teaching and fellowship. Come see what The Porch Live is all about at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Joshua.Bagby@HoustonFirst.org

MEN

Men: Serve

Sat, Jun 25 @ 8a-1p — The Loop (Oasis Rm)

Men will gather at The Loop Campus then head out in teams around the city to serve the widows in our church family. Yard work, home repairs, car maintenance and other tasks — there is a place for you to serve! Register by Fri, Jun 17, at HoustonFirst.org. If you are a widow in need of assistance, contact Sherry Oradat at 713.957.6764.

CONTACT Emily.Brown@HoustonFirst.org

THE LOOP

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

Father's Day Luncheon

Sun, Jun 19 @ 12:30p — The Loop (Oasis Rm)

Join us for a day to celebrate YOU, Dad! "My Dad, My Hero" Father's Day luncheon is for single dads (and moms) to let your children honor you. After lunch together, dads will receive a gift and hear from Minister to Men Eric Reed for a word of encouragement. Register at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Holly.Crain@HoustonFirst.org

WOMEN

Joy of Living — Jonah

Thursdays, Jun 2-30 @ 9:30a-12p — The Loop (Rm 249)

Reluctant to obey God? Running from God? Learn how to be used by God in spite of failures in this women's Bible study on Jonah. Join Marsha Taylor as she leads us through the book of Jonah to learn to obey God's call the first time. Learn more at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Meredith.Cann@HoustonFirst.org

In the Wilderness

Wednesdays, Jun 8-22 @ 6:30-8p

The Loop (Reception Rm)

In this three-week class, we will take an honest look at how God uses our seasons in the wilderness for something good. Shannon Owen will teach us how the Lord tests our mettle as we learn to see strength in weakness. Find out more at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Meredith.Cann@HoustonFirst.org

CYPRESS

WOMEN

Women's Night of Worship

The Bridge: Broken Ground

Wed, Jun 8 @ 5:45-8:15p — Lindsay Lakes Chapel

Join ladies from the Cypress Campus for a night of praise and worship, fellowship and desserts. Bring your daughters, mothers, sisters and girlfriends and hear a message from God's Word by Tammie Head. The event is free, but we ask you to bring individually packaged toothbrush and toothpaste as a donation to Helping Hands, one of our Cypress community partners. Register at HoustonFirst.org. Childcare not provided.

CONTACT Laura.Jordan@HoustonFirst.org

DOWNTOWN

MARRIED YOUNG ADULTS

Parents' Afternoon Out

Sat, Jun 25 @ 11a-1p — 1010 Lamar

Drop off your kiddos and enjoy some uninterrupted time to run errands, do some shopping, or enjoy a coffee date with your spouse. Our FirstFriends ministry will provide lunch and care for your kids (ages 4 & under). Register online at HoustonFirst.org by Thu, Jun 23.

CONTACT Kristin.Fowles@HoustonFirst.org

SIENNA

WOMEN

Sienna Summer Nights

Tuesdays, Jun 14 & Jul 19 @ 6:30-8:30p

Sienna Campus (Worship Ctr)

Gather with ladies from the Sienna Campus for worship, teaching and dinner. We will be blessed by Kay Altic as she teaches us more about who God is and who we, His children, are to Him. Register for \$20 at HoustonFirst.org.

CONTACT Cherry.Sears@HoustonFirst.org

SPANISH

Baptism Class & Baptisms

Sun, Jun 12 @ 3p — The Loop (Reception Rm)

Sun, Jun 19 @ 6:30p — The Loop (Cross Tower)

Are you interested in getting baptized or do you have questions or doubts about what it means? On Sun, Jun 12, Pastor Juan will lead a special class about what the Word of God says about baptism. Then, we'll celebrate all who have made a decision to be baptized the following Sun, Jun 19.

CONTACT Douglas.Hernandez@HoustonFirst.org



Houston's First Baptist Church is a relevant biblical community where we gather our hearts, grow our souls and give our lives as we seek to fulfill the Great Commission. For information, call 713.681.8000, or visit HoustonFirst.org

SUNDAYS AT HOUSTON'S FIRST

The Loop Campus

7401 Katy Fwy • Houston, TX 77024

Worship 9:15a • 11a • 5p

Life Bible Studies 8a • 9:15a • 10:45a • 6:30p

Cypress Campus

10300 Warner Smith Blvd • Cypress, TX 77433

Worship 9:30a • 11a

Life Bible Studies 9:30a • 11a

Downtown Campus

1010 Lamar • Houston, TX 77002

Worship 11a

Life Bible Studies 9:30a

Sienna Campus

4309 Sienna Pkwy • Missouri City, TX 77459

Worship 9:30a • 11a

Life Bible Studies 9:30a • 11a

Spanish Campus

7401 Katy Fwy • Houston, TX 77024

Worship 5p

Life Bible Studies 6:30p



HOUSTON'S FIRST
BAPTIST CHURCH
PASTOR GREGG MATTE



MINISTRY IMPACT YEAR-TO-DATE TOTALS FROM JAN 1 TO MAY 22, 2016

DECISIONS

496 New Church Members
80 Joined By Baptism

16% OF NEW MEMBERS
WERE BAPTIZED

ATTENDANCE

101,936 in Life Bible Studies
(5,097 weekly average)

121,561 in Worship Services
(5,789 weekly average)

23,932 on Webcast
(1,140 weekly average)

MISSIONS

13 Mission Trips with
115 Team Members



JUN 5, 2016

IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH • A FATHER'S PROMISE • IN HIS IMAGE • LIFE CHANGING WEEK • HOOPS NIGHT • PURPOSEFUL GIVING

GOOD GOOD FATHER

culture, God placed a cause and effect association between a child’s understanding of the nature of God and his or her relationship with an earthly father figure. A difficult biblical truth — and what an overwhelming responsibility! What personal qualities, motivations and life circumstances contribute to becoming a good dad? Three Houston’s First men share their own joys and challenges of fatherhood.

IN SICKNESS AND HEALTH

Medical scares with two of Mike Jones’ three children have played a huge role in shaping him as a dad. His and wife Bonnie’s firstborn, Tyler, was nearly 10 weeks premature, creating a stress-filled beginning to family life. Audrey, their third child and only daughter, was diagnosed at age four with a rare form of adrenal gland cancer.



“We’re not guaranteed tomorrow,” said Mike. “That realization led us to make a priority of spending time together, and we became intentional about having family dinners together.”

One advantage to spending time together from the early days has been in the building of close relationships between siblings. Tyler, Audrey and middle child Garret are roughly three years apart in age. “I like the way they interact with each other,” said Mike. “It’s cool to see them getting along.”

Praying regularly together with Bonnie through different phases of their 20-year marriage has empowered his ability as a dad. “Six weeks before Audrey’s diagnosis, we were going through a prayer book for couples,” said Mike. “God used that to shore us up for what lay ahead.” Audrey’s cancer surgery was a success and eight years ago was declared cancer-free. At 12, she continues making regular doctor visits to maintain a watch over her health.

Simply running errands with dad, attending church, and making a special effort to care for others through church ministries like Men: Serve has made an eternal impact on the kids, the aim of every Christ-loving parent. “All the kids are saved and walking with the Lord,” said Mike.

A FATHER’S PROMISE



Houston’s First staff member Steven Murray was nearly 38 when he married Amanda Gray, who had a young son from a previous marriage. Steven never expected to become an instant dad when he found the love of his life, but he embraced and developed a sweet relationship with three-and-a-half year-old Braden during his courtship with Amanda.

“I knew early on that Amanda was ‘the one,’” said Steven, “and because of that, I knew being a dad to Braden was part of the deal.” Braden and Steven’s “guy nights” began while he and Amanda were dating. When Steven proposed to Amanda, Steven also asked Braden if he could be his daddy. Steven’s self-imposed boundaries to guard Braden’s heart from unfulfilled expectations were relaxed, and Steven began to “court” Braden as his son.

“I said my vows to Amanda during the wedding ceremony and turned to Braden to recite ‘A Father’s Promise,’” said Steven. “It included biblical promises God made to his children — to be faithful, steadfast, loving; and to do all I can to be a reflection of God, the Father, to Braden.”

Braden himself broke through Steven’s pre-engagement boundaries by calling Steven “Daddy” for the first time at the wedding reception. Discussions about adopting Braden began after their marriage in 2008. Though his biological father had never been involved, Steven and Amanda were concerned about backlash, so they put the subject on the back burner.

In May 2012, a sore muscle that wouldn’t heal sent Braden to the pediatrician, who saw red spots on his chest and issued Amanda instructions to head straight to the emergency room. The diagnosis: an aggressive form of leukemia. Braden’s chemotherapy treatments began and so did adoption proceedings. “With Braden’s life on the line, we all the more wanted him to be declared my son,” recalls Steven. “Amanda and I put our fears aside and trusted God as we pursued adoption.”

Intense chemotherapy sent Braden into remission within just a few weeks, but active treatment was ongoing until May 2014. For four years, Steven and Amanda have accompanied Braden to Texas Children’s Hospital for his monthly check ups. After much prayer — and holding their breath — the family has been relieved to hear that all is still well.

Braden officially began signing his last name Murray when the adoption was finalized in the summer of 2013, four years after he welcomed into the family a brother, Wilson, now 7, and two years after welcoming a sister, Caroline, now 4.

IN HIS IMAGE

“I loved my dad a lot,” said Gary Zallar, who at 53 is the same age his dad was when he died more than 40 years ago. “I think about how my dad must have felt about the pressures of life at this age and wonder if he had the same insecurities — like ‘Am I doing the right things?’”

Gary says when he thinks about being a parent to his son Tim, a college sophomore in Arizona, he can’t help but think about his “awesome wife, Ann.” He was 23 when he met Ann, who was 19. “I led Ann to Jesus,” he says. The young couple purposed early in their marriage not to argue in front of any children they might have.

LIFE CHANGING WEEK

God uses people and events to turn hearts toward Him. The Lord led a high school freshman from the other side of the world to Houston’s First to attend Rush Week, and her life will never be the same.

Sixteen year-old Maiwenn Pensu, a native of Vannes, France, was in her bedroom four hours away from the carnage the night of the Paris bombings. She wondered about the fate of family members who were attending the soccer match at Stade de France, where one of six shootings and bombings occurred that night in November last year. Though relieved when hearing family members were safe, Maiwenn, all of France and the rest of world were in shock. During the hours following the attacks, however, she felt God’s presence, peace and a sense of community she attributes in great part to the prayers of friends she made last summer at Rush Week, a Houston’s First camp-mission trip for students.

“I thank God for friends,” said Maiwenn. “I saw the posts on my Facebook, messages on Twitter and FaceTime calls I missed while I was sleeping — and when I woke up and heard the death toll I started to cry. But I felt loved. All my friends were praying for me. Their care showed me how precious and amazing they are.”

Since her first visit to Houston last summer to stay with cousins and Houston’s First members Sydney and Samantha Normand, Maiwenn has discovered a newfound faith in Christ that she directly attributes to her experiences at Rush Week.

“After we arrived at the hotel in Panama City Beach, Mimi (Bagnasco, her girls’ group leader) asked us to talk about how God entered our lives,” said Maiwenn. “As the other girls explained how Jesus had changed their lives, I felt something happening in me. Mimi told me later that God was speaking to me.”

During small group time is when a lot of big life decisions are being considered. “Maiwenn had confessed she was there only because her cousins invited her to this fun beach event,” said Mimi. “The idea of an all-knowing God who is in heaven was absurd to her — but she found it profoundly beautiful.”

The friendliness of the group and seeing the impact God had made on



“Rush Week was one of the first times I saw the impact of God’s love on people,” said Maiwenn. “I’ve had some of the hardest moments this year, but God also did some incredible things in my life. I realized that God allowed me to go to Rush Week so I could have people encouraging me and being there for me when I need them. There are life questions I had been asking myself for years and years that were answered that week.”

other students’ lives began working on Maiwenn’s heart. “I was starting to pray and to believe,” she said.

Mimi loves being a girls’ leader at Rush Week and began volunteering when her three kids were old enough to go. Then her husband Mike jumped in as a volunteer. “I love being able to connect with the girls spiritually and point them to Jesus in everything they do,” said Mimi.

Though God planted seeds of faith during Rush Week, Maiwenn was a little skeptical that she could continue down that path of faith after returning home. “I thought everything would go back to the way things were once I got home,” she said. To her surprise, she felt the presence of God still with her back in France. God continued bringing divine appointments her way.

Maiwenn read her Bible, found some devotionals to read, and watched the weekly Houston’s First worship webcast. “God made things come to me,” she said. She believes God strengthened her faith and after a while, she “let Christ have her life.”

In April this year, Maiwenn’s much beloved cousin living in France committed suicide. A woman she met at the funeral encouraged her to go to church. “I learned there were people in France that I didn’t know were Christians.” Feeling some distance from God after losing her cousin, she contacted Mimi. “Going to Rush Week 2016 is my biggest dream at the moment,” said Maiwenn. “But it seems just impossible financially.” Her mom said perhaps 2017 might be the year to return.

NEXT STEP Adults are invited to serve as leaders during Rush Week 2016 in Panama City Beach, Florida, the week of July 22-28. Contact Hannah.Stovall@HoustonsFirst.org or search for “Rush Week” at HoustonsFirst.org to learn how you can be a part of the team!

IN HIS IMAGE (continued)

“Being a good husband and father begins with my relationship with Jesus — walking daily with Him,” said Gary. “Doing that makes my relationships with others so much better.”

Early on, Gary and Ann became involved in parenting classes such as Growing Kids God’s Way, where they met and shared with other couples the challenges of parenting; and Parenting by Design, a class that taught them how, among other things, to help kids work through their mistakes. They researched, read and took a variety of classes to help them become more equipped.

Gary recalls an encounter that changed his relationship with Tim. “I’d ask him something and he wouldn’t answer my question,” said Gary. “I asked, ‘Son, why don’t you answer me?’ Tim countered, ‘You never wait to hear my answer.’ I was too impatient to wait as he thought about his answer. I admitted to Tim then and there that I’m not a perfect person.”



Though Gary grew up one of five kids in Colorado Springs, a military town, for him the Armed Services never held much allure. “Joining ROTC was a big step for Tim,” said Gary. “He got a great scholarship and doors opened for him.” After college, Tim will enter the Air Force as a Second Lieutenant. Fearing for his safety, Gary questioned the wisdom of Tim’s decision. Tim told his dad that he felt called by God to go into the military.

“Ultimately, parenting is about helping our kids become who God wants them to be instead of trying to make them into our own image,” said Gary.

HOOPS NIGHT

Houston 1:8, our church’s stay-in-town mission trip, provides several ways you can minister to your own city the week of July 11-14. A few men from Summit Young Single Adults at The Loop Campus participated at one ministry site and found a divine calling to continue year-round.

The Houston’s First Faith Center-Spring Branch serves families living in and around Long Point Road in a transitional neighborhood less than four miles from The Loop Campus. Neighboring residents benefit from the programs offered at the Faith Center that include a food pantry and clothes closet, multicultural worship, and Kids’ Club, a Saturday ministry for children living in neighboring apartment complexes. Hoops Night is a spin off from Kids’ Club to benefit older children and teens who like basketball. But they are getting more from volunteer mentors than an evening of basketball each Tuesday night; the boys are finding God and learning to follow Him.

“Many of these boys have absent fathers,” said Kyle Paulus, who recently took over leading the Hoops Night ministry. “A divorce rate at 50 percent, easy access to porn through technology and the R-rated music kids are listening to are having a negative effect on boys and young men in our culture. They need time from committed men who will mentor and communicate God’s Word to them.”

Kyle was a member at Houston’s First only three weeks when he attended his first Hoops Night as a volunteer. Now, less than a year later, he boldly took the baton from Jacob Andrews, one of eight original Hoops Night mentors who kicked off the program nearly two years ago. Ameer Omar, on the Missions staff, and Jessica Nolte, now on staff at the Faith Center-Spring Branch, were instrumental in laying a foundation for Hoops Night.

“Hoops Night has grown through word of mouth,” said Jacob. “The guys are having fun and telling their friends.” The Long Point Baptist Church van picks up kids at a local apartment complex each week, often stopping along the way to grab a bite to eat, and then shuttles the boys to the Faith Center gym to play ball.

“It took awhile for the boys to warm up to us,” said Jacob. “Many are highly competitive and some wear their emotions on their sleeves. We’ve been able to develop relationships with them, and they’ve become much more open than they were in the past.”

Some of the values the men try to instill in the boys during the devotional portion of the evening are forgiveness, self-control, managing relationships, communication and problem-solving skills. The mentors give Bibles to each boy and over



time many have gotten in the habit of bringing them back each week, some even having read the assigned Scripture in preparation.

“They have learned to make eye contact, they’re more focused and have begun to do personal reflection and introspection,” said Jacob. “There is something stirring in them. It’s a real blessing to see for those of us who volunteer.”

Jacob says Hoops Night is changing the volunteers. He is a case in point. “I’m not typically outgoing,” he said. “Doing ministry is difficult for me. I find it easier to communicate with older people, so I had to refine my way of communicating to fit the audience. We’ve all had to learn something new to do this ministry.”

Not only are the volunteers changing as they minister to the boys, but the boys are becoming men and learning to accept more responsibility. One of the high school boys who graduated continued coming to Hoops Night. He was there every week, prepared and engaged. He was looking for a job, so Jacob took a chance and gave him an interview at the company he works for, one that builds, renovates and maintains sports facilities.

“He made a good impression and got the job,” said Jacob. “We’re teaching him all the processes of the business. We would like to turn him into someone who can manage our crews. His future is unlimited if he applies himself.”

The boys are there to play basketball, but they also learn to love Jesus, shed anger and walk a different path. Godly men who volunteer each week are effectively influencing the lives of these boys for Christ, and in the process, their lives are also being changed.

NEXT STEP

Be a Differencemaker in the life of a young man or woman, child or neighborhood by serving as a Houston 1:8 missionary this July 11-14.

Register by the Sun, June 26, deadline at HoustonsFirst.org

PASS IT ON!



Stories are meant to be told. Visit HoustonsFirst.org to share these stories via social media or email.